

**TIP** Start slowly so that your joints and muscles can warm up. Your body works better when it is warm.

**TIP** Remember to replace lost fluids—you will get thirsty in the cold.

## Visibility

- \* You will often be cycling in the dark. A rear red light and a front white light are essential. A red rear reflector and front white reflector are good back-ups in case a light goes out. Use rechargeable batteries since you will need to use your lights almost everyday.
- \* Reflective gear is also important for dark and wet weather. Add reflective tape to your jacket. Reflective bands are also widely available for your pant legs and arms, as are reflective vests.
- \* Some cyclists wear high contrast yellow lenses to increase their night vision.

## Wet weather

**TIP** Carry an extra plastic bag to cover your seat and for lining bags or panniers.

**SAFETY TIP** Brake often to compensate for wet rims; braking takes up to six times longer when rims are wet. Steel rims take longer to stop than alloy ones.

**SAFETY TIP** Street car tracks are especially slippery. Always cross them at a 90 degree angle. You might want to practise on dry days.

- \* Full fenders are a must, and are available for all bike types. They will keep the spray off and help to keep your feet dry.
- \* Avoid puddles that may hide potholes or other road hazards.
- \* Surfaces, like streetcar tracks, painted lines, metal bridges and plates are slippery when wet. Avoid them, or cross with caution.

## Snow and Ice

Did you know that Bylaw 530-1999 prohibits the shovelling of snow onto the road?

Caution: Not every winter day is a cycling day. Some days it is better to leave your bicycle at home. Drivers can't stop as quickly and the roads may be narrower because of the snow piled up at the curb. Icy conditions are never good for cycling. Use discretion.

**TIP** Adjust your fenders, if necessary, so that there is lots of room between the fender and tire to avoid snow build-up.

**TIP** Let your bicycle get cold outside before riding—less snow will stick to it if it's already cold.

**TIP** Carry a lighter or light machine oil, in case your lock freezes. Try adding a drop of oil or graphite lock lubricant in the locking mechanism to prevent freezing.

**TIP** Remember to take your water bottle inside so it won't freeze!

**SAFETY TIP** If you encounter black ice, steer straight, don't pedal, and try not to brake as this could cause you to skid and fall.

**SAFETY TIP** Leave extra time to cycle more slowly in wet and snowy conditions.

If you choose to ride, here are some suggestions:

- \* Lessen tire pressure to the low end of the recommended range (written on tire sidewall) to increase traction.
- \* You should not use clips in snowy or icy conditions; you may have to put your feet down in a hurry.
- \* Thick-tread mountain bike tires (particularly good for hard packed snow) will increase the traction or grip on snow, whereas thin tires (particularly good for loose snow) will cut through the snow to the pavement. Studded tires are noisy on dry pavement but particularly good for ice.
- \* Snow banks may cause you to ride further out in a lane. If you need to move out from the curb be sure to signal your intentions to other traffic. Shoulder check to make sure it's safe to move out, signal, do a second shoulder check, and then move out.

Caution: Streetcar tracks will be icy when other road surfaces are not. Try to walk your bicycle across streetcar or railway tracks. If you must cycle across, always cross at a right angle.

## Maintenance

**TIP** Keep your bicycle covered and protected from rain, snow, and slush.

- \* There is far more dirt on the road in the winter, especially with melting ice and snow, so your bicycle needs more maintenance.
- \* Clean and lubricate the chain regularly, and oil the freewheel. Consider carefully putting a drop of oil at the end of each wheel spoke to slow down corrosion, but make sure the rims are clear of oil so that your brakes work.
- \* Salt causes wear and tear on a bicycle, mostly due to rust. Wipe your bicycle down at the end of the day to reduce salt build-up. Brush away snow and slush from the rear derailleur and freewheel; large bristle brushes (like a toilet bowl brush) work well.

**TIP** Consider using an inexpensive (beater) bike for the snow. Keep old bikes out of the landfill! They can be re-used and recycled.



No bicycle parking at your work place?  
Start a Bicycle User Group (BUG).  
For more information call the BUG Network at (416) 392-7592 or email BUGs@toronto.ca.  
[www.toronto.ca/bug](http://www.toronto.ca/bug)



For this information in another language please call Access Toronto at 416-338-0338.



# BUG

Bicycle User Group Network



This handy brochure gives the experienced Toronto cyclist tips to keep on riding through the cold weather. With a little planning and appropriate gear you will enjoy a comfortable ride!

**TIP** Leave a few extra minutes to adjust your helmet to fit over your hat/hood. You may need to remove some of the helmet's padding. Check that your helmet sits in the proper position by placing two fingers above an eyebrow. The bottom of the helmet should touch the top finger.

- \* Cover your head to conserve the most heat.
- \* Choose thin, lightweight and wind-resistant materials.
- \* Toques and balaclavas work well.
- \* Remember to cover your ears! Try an earband.
- \* A helmet cover will reduce wind and help protect you from rain and snow. It may be all you need for 0°C and above.
- \* Cycle specific hats—helmet liners fit snugly under the helmet.
- \* If you wear a hood, do a shoulder check on each side before you ride to make sure your vision is not compromised. You may need to tuck your hood under the sides of your helmet.

- There are a number of options for keeping your face warm. See what works the best for you.
- \* Try tying a scarf so that it covers your face from your nose to down over your neck. You can add velcro to an existing scarf to help keep it in place, or buy one at a bicycle or outdoors store.
  - \* Balaclava—covers the neck, face and head. There are very lightweight ones on the market, including silk. Cyclists with long hair may prefer other options.
  - \* Facemask—these have an opening for the bottom of the nose and tiny holes over the mouth, making it easier to breathe; some also cover the neck.
  - \* Eye-Protection—prescription glasses, sun glasses, clear or yellow lenses, or ski goggles.

## Head



## Torso

**TIP** Jackets, fleeces and tops with full front zippers and underarm zips increase your options for moderating temperature.

- \* A thin water/windproof jacket is a must. There are many cycling-specific jackets on the market. Jackets should be long so they don't ride up and expose you to cold air, and large enough for layers underneath. If you can afford it, invest in a gore-tex jacket. Breathable materials will make your trip more enjoyable.

polyester/microfibre synthetic fabrics) next to the skin to keep away sweat and moisture. Silk and wool are natural fabric choices. Stay away from cotton as the base layer will absorb sweat and keep it next to your skin, making you wet and cold.

- \* Add layers over the wicking layer, with layers getting progressively warmer. Many cyclists find that one warm fleece or lightweight wool sweater over the base layer is often enough. You might want to add one or two thin layers in between.
- \* If your commute is relatively short, you may not need the wicking layer (so long as you have a good breathable jacket) because you won't have enough time to build up a sweat.

- \* For commutes longer than 20 minutes, start with a wicking base layer (made of

# Dressing for cold weather cycling

**TIP** Wool or fleece gloves will keep hands warm even when wet. If your hands sweat, consider a wicking liner.

- \* Hands are in a stationary position and are more subject to cold than the rest of your body. Try wiggling your fingers when you come to a stop.
- \* Mitts will keep your fingers warmer than gloves because the fingers are touching; gloves are easier for shifting and braking.
- \* For freezing temperatures and below, consider adding a liner or try an outer shell made of water/windproof material.
- \* Have a waterproof option available for rain and snow. If your gloves aren't waterproof, try a shell.
- \* Ski gloves are good for temperatures below freezing.
- \* Cycling lobster gloves are a combo mitt/glove with two fingers per segment and a separate one for the thumb.
- \* Bike pogies are oversized mitts that fit over the handlebar ends, making it easy to operate the brakes and shifters. You may not need gloves under the pogies until it's 0°C or below. Make sure that it is easy to take your hands off the bars to signal.

## Hands



## Feet



**TIP** Avoid too many sock layers because that can cut off circulation. Bring an extra pair of socks in case the first pair get wet.

- \* Waterproof hiking boots work well.
- \* Cover your shoes with cycling overbooties, or try a plastic bag over your socks.
- \* The winter cycling shoes or boots on the market can be expensive.
- \* Clip—pedal cycling shoes can conduct heat away from your feet; try another system or simply cycle without them.
- \* Wool or fleece socks are good; add a thin pair of liner socks. If your feet sweat avoid using cotton liners.

## Legs



**TIP** A reflective band around your right pant leg will increase visibility and prevent it from catching in the chain.

- \* Many cyclists are comfortable wearing their usual winter wear, particularly for shorter commutes. Stretchy, roomy clothing with some wind resistance will be the most comfortable.
- \* Consider wearing tights or long underwear with another layer over them for protection from wind.
- \* You can invest in a variety of cycle-specific clothing (such as waterproof cycling pants) to reduce windchill and protect you from snow and rain.
- \* Rain pants are an option for snow, wind, and rain—get them long so you can easily bend your knees. You can pull them up over your regular pants, thermal or long underwear, or cycling tights.

## Layering

- \* Dressing for cold weather cycling uses the same layering principles as other cold weather activities. Layering allows you to add and subtract layers according to how warm or cool you are.
- \* There's no need to buy cycle-specific clothes—unless you really want to. Function over fashion rules. It is important to use thin/lightweight materials to reduce bulk and maintain manoeuvrability.
- \* The number of layers to wear depends on the individual and the length of the commute. Shorter commutes may require warmer clothing since the body has less time to heat up. Start off feeling a little cool because you will quickly warm up.

If you overdress you will become sweaty in no time.

- \* Experiment with different combinations and see what works for you. Consider writing down the daily temperature, what you wore that day, and what worked well.

**TIP** Before changing layers, try working harder (cycling faster) if you are too cold and cycling more slowly if you are too warm.

**TIP** Remember that once you stop cycling you will cool down quickly. Carry an extra layer if you plan on stopping or walking—or just in case the temperature drops for the ride back.